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Have Fun

Both houses of Congress are readying public hearings on the proliferation of eavesdropping devices. It's about time. Technology has raced ahead of the protections of the law in devising means of discreetly tapping your competitor's telephone or tuning in on your neighbor's conversation.

The federal government itself is probably the most active snooper. Not just the FBI, the CIA and the Pentagon but almost every bureau is engaged in some kind of snooping, as, for instance, the Post Office Department bugs its rest rooms.

Those government agencies that haven't yet caught onto the game will find in the catalogue of the General Services Administration an executive desk-pen set with concealed microphone, available to any agency for \$24.95 "for relaxed office dictation or discreet recording." The GSA also advertises, for \$9.60, a "telephone adapter for monitoring phone calls without a beep", a procedure which another federal agency, the Federal Communications Commission, says is strictly illegal.

Not just the government but anybody can play. An advertisement in general commercial circulation offers for sale an 18-inch, transistorized disc called "The Snooper", priced at \$18.95. "Have fun," the advertisement reads, "aim it at a group of friends a block away and hear every word." Some friend.